



# ***AMENDMENT to the 2025 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN***

***for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area***

***January 12, 2006***



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## **2025 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN AMENDMENT**

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### **BACKGROUND**

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan is a long range transportation plan that paints a picture of what a metropolitan area will look like 20 years from now in terms of population, employment, number of vehicles on roadways, etc. Based on this information the plan identifies transportation activities that need to take place to accommodate the anticipated growth: what roads need to be built or improved, what transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities need to be developed or improved, and how all these different projects and modes of transportation will work together.

The Mid-Region Council of Governments is the agency responsible for developing the MTP for the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Local elected officials, technical staff and the public worked together to prepare the 2025 MTP, which was approved by local elected officials in May 2003.

The 2025 MTP covers the period from 2003 to 2025. It includes projects ranging from walkways to bicycle trails and from interchange reconstruction to new roadway lanes. It was developed using the most up-to-date information available at the time regarding transportation needs, potential solutions, and available funding.

The MTP was amended in the Spring of 2004 because of several events that occurred following local 2025 MTP approval in May 2003. These were (1) Legislative approval of Governor Richardson's Investment Partnership (GRIP). The funding in the GRIP made it possible for projects that were not included in the 2025 MTP to be implemented and for several projects that were included in later years to be accomplished in an earlier timeframe. Two such projects were the commuter rail project and reconstruction of the I-40/Coors interchange. (2) Unanticipated federal funds for projects made it possible to move some projects already included in the MTP forward into an earlier timeframe (i.e., Paseo del Volcan in Rio Rancho between Unser and Idalia). (3) Additional work was completed on solutions for roadway issues and funding for those solutions (i.e., the I-25 frontage road between Sunport Boulevard and Gibson Boulevard).

The mission of the 2025 MTP is to strive "to preserve the unique character, diversity, and environmental quality of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA) and to equitably serve its population while accommodating orderly growth..." and to integrate "transit, pedestrian, bicycling, and motor vehicle modes of travel by increasing accessibility and mobility options for people and goods, including intermodal facilities. The MTP guides the

development of an efficient multimodal transportation system that seeks to achieve balance among the sometimes competing goals.”

An Update to the MTP is expected to be completed in the Fall of 2006. The Update will review the long range transportation needs, policies, projects and programs in the urban area. It will look at bicycle and pedestrian, transit, roadway, and intermodal needs. It will evaluate what has been accomplished under the 2025 MTP and consider the area’s needs in light of the financial expectations through the year 2030. The result will be the 2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Work on the Update began in the Fall of 2004 and is expected to continue through the Fall of 2006.

## **AMENDMENT TO THE PLAN**

In early 2005, the City of Albuquerque requested consideration of an amendment to the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The request was to add to the 2025 MTP a project to re-stripe Montañó Road from two 14-feet to four 11-feet general purpose lanes, from a location approximately 0.24 mile east of Coors Boulevard to a location approximately 0.1 mile west of 4th Street (approximately 2.4 miles total – see map below), in fiscal year 2006 at a cost of approximately \$20,000, using local funds only.

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Area of Amendment



The roadway in question is and will remain functionally classified as a minor arterial. The re-striping project will retain the current bike lane cross sections (varying from 4- to 5-feet in travel lane width) and remain entirely within the existing right-of-way of the current road. The proposed project includes those portions of Montaño Road that cross the Rio Grande and are adjacent to or traverse the Los Poblanos Historic District. The latter portion of the road is subject to an existing Memorandum of Agreement for DA Permit No. NM-OY-0485.

## **IMPACT OF THE AMENDMENT**

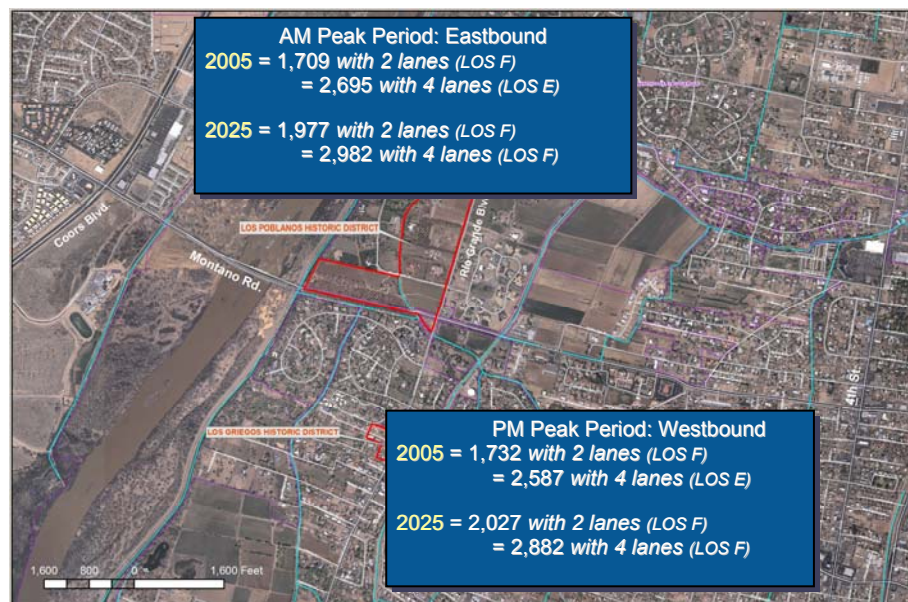
### ***Traffic and Regional Mobility***

The MPO staff analysis of the impacts of re-striping Montaño Road to four lanes indicates that vehicular traffic volumes could increase by about 66 percent in 2005, from approximately 27,000 to 45,000 vehicles per day. By the year 2025, approximately 32,000 vehicles per day are projected to use the Montaño Road river crossing in a 2-lane configuration, while up to 50,000 vehicles per day are projected if the facility is expanded to 4 lanes.

MRCOG's regional travel demand model suggests that re-striping Montaño may improve its urban street level of service (LOS) from F, "flow at extremely low speeds," to E, "significant delay." Given that the number of vehicles seeking to cross the Rio Grande increases by an average of approximately 12,500 each year, that improvement is likely to be temporary, lasting six to twelve months only. For the year 2025, LOS F is expected whether Montaño Road is two- or four-lanes wide.

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### **Traffic and Regional Mobility**



The model suggests that re-striping Montañño may slightly decrease travel times from the City's northwest mesa areas and Rio Rancho; reducing a 45-minute morning commute trip in 2005 by about one minute. This reduction is caused mainly by some traffic on other river crossings shifting to Montañño Road, thus relieving congestion on those alternate crossings. This, however, would provide only temporary relief.

Traffic originating within a four- to five-mile radius of the Montañño Road re-striping project would likely notice no improvements to travel time at all, and may even experience some minor increases in travel times to downtown Albuquerque, adding approximately 20- to 30-seconds to a 25-minute trip on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. The model suggests that there would be no significant peak hour relief in traffic congestion at the Coors/I-40 interchange as a result of the Montañño Road re-striping project.

### *Crashes and Safety*

Intersection crash rate data from 1996 to 2002 identify the Montañño Road/Montgomery Boulevard Corridor as the second most dangerous roadway in the Albuquerque metropolitan area. Several major intersections along this Corridor have crash rates of more than twice the metropolitan average. Of the twenty most dangerous intersections in the Albuquerque metropolitan area, eight are located along this Corridor. The intersection of Montañño Road and Coors Boulevard has a crash rate of 3.2 per million vehicle miles of travel. The regional average is 1.3.

Based on expected increases in congestion and the fact that the re-striping project will not add any significant intersection capacity, increasing traffic volumes on Montañño Road by adding lanes may aggravate the high crash rate and compromise safety.

### *Integration of Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans*

Existing bicycle lanes on Montañño Road will be retained at current widths of between four and five feet. The Long Range Bikeway System map identifies one proposed at-grade bike route (Guadalupe Trail) intersecting Montañño Road. This may require mid-block crossing controls if two additional lanes of congested traffic are added.

### *Transportation Conformity to State Air Quality Implementation Plans*

In March 2005, the Transportation Conformity Technical Committee (TCTC) determined in that the re-striping project was "regionally significant" for air quality purposes. This means that the effects of adding this project to the MTP on regional air quality needed to be studied.

After analyzing the regional mobile source emissions from the project, the TCTC determined in August 2005 that the amended MTP with the re-striping project does indeed conform to the State Implementation Plan's Carbon Monoxide regional mobile sources emissions budgets for each interim and horizon year forecast. Therefore, this proposed amendment to the MTP meets transportation conformity requirements.

MRCOG staff analyzed the proposed re-striping project using MRCOG's regional travel forecasting model and the latest version of the Environmental Protection Agency's *Mobile 6.2* emissions software. The travel model is used to project the number of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and average speeds by roadway functional classification. The speeds are then used as an input to *Mobile 6.2*, which produces carbon monoxide (CO) emission rates. Those rates are applied to VMT to produce total emissions data. The results of that analysis are presented below.

### Conformity Analysis Results for Adding Lanes to Montañó

| Year        | CO (Tons/day) |        | Budget | CO Headroom (Tons/day) |       |
|-------------|---------------|--------|--------|------------------------|-------|
|             | No Build      | Build  |        | No Build               | Build |
| <b>2005</b> | 317.47        | 317.57 | 367.28 | 49.81                  | 49.71 |
| <b>2006</b> | 283.74        | 283.83 | 312.65 | 28.91                  | 28.82 |
| <b>2010</b> | 242.26        | 242.38 | 312.65 | 70.39                  | 70.27 |
| <b>2015</b> | 217.47        | 217.95 | 312.65 | 95.18                  | 94.70 |
| <b>2025</b> | 217.51        | 217.64 | 312.65 | 95.14                  | 95.01 |

*No Build = not re-striping Montañó*

*Build = re-striping Montañó*

*MRCOG, 07/21/05*

These results show that emissions of CO would be expected to increase by relatively very small amounts due to the re-striping project.

As of August 22, 2005, the new Limited Maintenance State Implementation Plan (SIP) for Carbon Monoxide went into effect. Under the new SIP, plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) are no longer required to demonstrate that they meet regional CO emissions budgets. Requirements to meet federal transportation planning regulations and to conduct a public involvement process do need to be met in order to demonstrate conformity with the new SIP. In addition to those conformity requirements, for each plan and TIP approval or amendment MRCOG must obtain a letter from the Federal Highway Administration stating that the region remains below 85 percent of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Carbon Monoxide.

### *Environmental Justice*

#### **Regulatory Background**

Recipients of federal funds are required to certify nondiscrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1994, Presidential Executive Order (EO) 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income" directed all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to consider Environmental Justice principles throughout their planning and decision-making processes.



There are three fundamental Environmental Justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.

### Technical Findings

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area has a total population of 525,772, of which 50.6 percent was identified as minority,<sup>1</sup> 25.8 percent was less than 18 years old, 11.5 percent was 65 and over, and 12.9 percent as living below the poverty level.<sup>2</sup>

### Analysis

MRCOG's *Transportation Accessibility Model* (TRAM) was used to assess the accessibility of the Montano Corridor between Coors Boulevard and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The analysis looked at the number of people located within a 5, 10, and 15 minute walk and bike ride from the Montano Corridor as defined above. The table below shows this information by population group.

In addition, three recreational facilities and one library are located within a 15 minute walk from the Montano Corridor. A 15 minute bike ride provides access to six recreational facilities, four community centers (family, seniors, and/or multipurpose), and three libraries and museums.

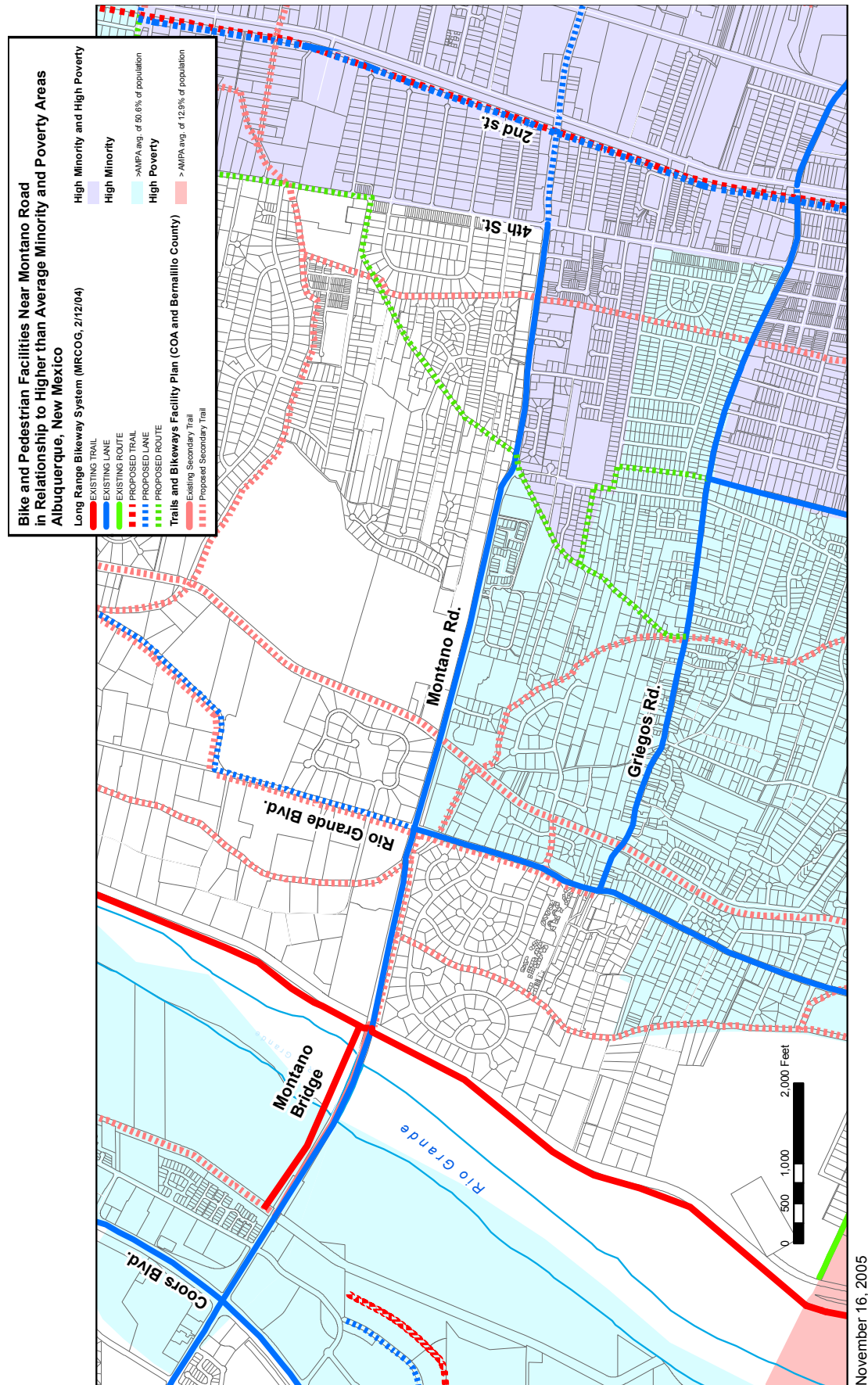
### Montano Corridor Accessibility to Potential Markets (percentages)

|                       | Minority  | Non-Minority | Low-Income | Population younger than 16 | Population 65 and over |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
|                       | Walking   |              |            |                            |                        |
| <b>5 minute walk</b>  | 0.2       | 0.2          | 0.1        | 0.2                        | 0.2                    |
| <b>10 minute walk</b> | 0.8       | 0.6          | 0.9        | 0.6                        | 0.7                    |
| <b>15 minute walk</b> | 1.7       | 1.3          | 2.2        | 1.4                        | 1.3                    |
|                       | Bicycling |              |            |                            |                        |
| <b>5 minute ride</b>  | 1.5       | 1.1          | 2.1        | 1.3                        | 1.2                    |
| <b>10 minute ride</b> | 5.9       | 4.3          | 10.4       | 5.4                        | 4.5                    |
| <b>15 minute ride</b> | 11.9      | 9.6          | 19.4       | 11.8                       | 8.8                    |

<sup>1</sup> Minority includes all persons who did not report themselves as "White not-Hispanic" on the 2000 Census.

<sup>2</sup> Poverty status was determined for all persons except persons under 15 years old, living in military group quarters, living in college dormitories or the institutionalized.





While re-striping Montañero will not affect the size and composition of the traditionally underserved population in the project area, it is expected to negatively impact the Corridor's walk- and bike-ability, especially at mid-block crossings, and therefore area residents' accessibility to recreational and community facilities.

### *Impact on Funding for Transportation Projects*

Because this project is expected to require \$20,000 in local funds only, there is no impact to financial constraint of either the 2025 MTP or the TIP. Because the project is regionally significant, in accordance with 23CFR450.324(f)(5), it must be included in the TIP for informational purposes. This is why an amendment to the current 2006-2011 TIP will be considered and, if approved, forwarded to the New Mexico State Transportation Commission for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program during its next quarterly amendment cycle.

## **AMENDMENT PROCESS**

### *Interagency Consultation with Federal, Tribal, State and Local Partners*

Coordination has occurred with the Albuquerque District, Corps of Engineers, related to the provisions of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that exists between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office, concurred in by the City of Albuquerque and accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The MOA restricts Montañero Road to two driving lanes on the bridge and through or adjacent to the Los Poblanos Historic District. Amending the MTP to allow four lanes for that portion of Montañero Road would thus require a change to the MOA.

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Area of Los Poblanos Historic District



The New Mexico Division of Federal Highway Administration, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New Mexico Department of Transportation District 3, the New Mexico Environment Department, and the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Air Quality Control Board have all been involved in the determination of transportation conformity with air quality plans for this proposed amendment.

### *Public Involvement*

MRCOG staff worked closely with the City of Albuquerque, New Mexico Department of Transportation, and other member governments in the metropolitan area to develop this proposed amendment. Written public comments were sought during the period from November 18, 2005 to December 19, 2005. The public was invited to provide comments by e-mail, at meetings, by fax or mail, or on-line. The opportunity for additional public input was also provided during Committee and Board meetings held during the formal decision-making process.

The draft amendment was posted on the MRCOG website during the public review and comment period. MRCOG staff also provided information and received comments from the Albuquerque Air Quality Control Board and the TCTC.

Major concerns raised by the public during the public involvement period were provided to the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) before their consideration of this amendment proposal.

Since the formal public comment period began on November 18, 2005, the MRCOG received 87 pages of written comments from 50 people, summarized in general below:

| Issue  | Number of comments addressing the issue |                |
|--|---|----------------|
|  | Before 12/19/05                         | After 12/19/05 |
| Concerns over original MOA not being followed  | (6)                                     | (1)            |
| Concerns over lack of regard for process   | (9)                                     | (1)            |
| Concern that this project does not conform to mission of 2025 MTP                              | (6)                                     |                |
| Concerns over safety (speed, pedestrian crossings, bikes now closer to vehicles, school zone,) | (21)                                    | (4)            |
| Concerns over access (entering/exiting driveways, emergency vehicle access)                    | (8)                                     | (3)            |
| Concerns over property values  | (1)                                     | (1)            |
| Concerns over noise  | (7)                                     | (1)            |
| Environmental concerns   | (7)                                     | (2)            |
| HOV needed   | (6)                                     |                |
| Reversible traffic lane needed   | (4)                                     |                |
| More/better transit needed across river  | (5)                                     |                |

|                                     |     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Four-laning Montano is a good thing | (5) | (7) |
| Add more river crossings            | (5) | (1) |

Following recommendations for approval from both the TCC and the Public Involvement Committee (PIC), the MTB approved the conformity determination, the plan amendment, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendment at a special board meeting on January 12, 2006.

